

3.1. Political opponents, including perceived political opponents

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In the February 2025 report, Freedom House noted that opposition politicians and activists were frequently subjected to fabricated criminal charges and ‘other forms of harassment’ aimed at preventing their involvement in the political process.²⁹³ In mid-October 2025, Novaya Gazeta Europe reported that opposition politicians face increasing reprisals, with political scientist Margarita Zavadskaya linking this pressure to Russia’s parliamentary elections, due by September 2026.²⁹⁴

Illustrative cases of criminal prosecution of political opponents and high-profile political activists include the following cases. In May 2025, a Moscow court sentenced Grigory Melkonyants,²⁹⁵ co-founder and co-chair of the independent Russian election monitoring group Golos, to five years in a penal colony²⁹⁶ on charges of organisation of activities of an ‘undesirable organisation,’ stemming from his alleged cooperation with the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO), which was declared ‘undesirable’ in 2021.²⁹⁷ Russian authorities designated Golos as a ‘foreign agent’ in 2023. Grigory Melkonyants has been in custody since his arrest in August 2023.²⁹⁸

On 10 June 2025, Lev Shlosberg, deputy chair of the opposition Yabloko party, was put under house arrest on criminal charges of discrediting the Russian army,²⁹⁹ facing a prison sentence of up to five years.³⁰⁰ Prior to his arrest, law enforcement officers searched his home and the Yabloko office in Pskov.³⁰¹ Lev Shlosberg was designated a ‘foreign agent’ in June 2023 and is also facing criminal charges for evading obligations of a ‘foreign agent’,³⁰² which carries a possible sentence of up to two years in prison.³⁰³

On 8 July 2025, the FSB opened a criminal case in absentia³⁰⁴ on treason charges against Pavel Andreev,³⁰⁵ one of the founders of the Revolt-Center, the independent cultural centre in Syktyvkar, the capital of the Komi Republic.³⁰⁶ Andreev had also previously worked with the Komi Memorial Rights Commission³⁰⁷ and was an executive director of online news outlet 7 x 7.³⁰⁸ The next day, security forces carried out searches at the Revolt Centre³⁰⁹ and detained its executive director Daria Chernysheva³¹⁰ for one day for failing to comply with the obligations of a ‘foreign agent’.³¹¹ Authorities also conducted home searches and interrogations of a human rights activist in Irkutsk, two prisoners’ rights activists in Yoshkar-Ola, the capital of Mari El Republic, and a Yabloko party member in Veliky Novgorod. However, as reported by Meduza, it remained unclear whether all of these searches and interrogations were conducted in connection with the Revolt Centre.³¹²

On 2 October 2025, the deputy chairman of Yabloko, Maxim Kruglov, was detained and charged with spreading ‘false’ information about the Russian army, facing from 5 to 10 years in prison.³¹³ The charges reportedly stemmed from his Telegram posts, made back in 2022: one about the killing of civilians in Bucha in March 2022 and another one on UN data on casualties in Mariupol.³¹⁴ On 10 October 2025, a Moscow court ordered the confiscation of his assets. According to his lawyer, who appealed the decision, this ruling

‘was not a common practice’, given that he does not have any ‘exorbitant’ income.[315](#)

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